

NGOs arrive!

The 1999 CSD Intersessional starts with great hopes of developing successful approaches to Sustainable Tourism, and Consumption and Production. NGOs have been working hard in preparing the dialogue papers for the CSD in April. Copies are available on the CSD NGO Steering Committee web site <www.csdngo.org/csdngo>, or on the U.N. Division for Sustainable Development's site <www.un.org/esa/sustdev>.

Next week a second wave of NGOs will be arriving to work on Oceans and the preparation for the Small Island Developing States review. This year's debates on SIDS may hinge on whether new and additional resources (does this sound familiar?) are available.

To make a real difference between now and 2002, what will be needed is REAL ACTION, REAL COMMITMENTS (AND LOTS OF COFFEE!)

Earth Summit III -- 2002

Learning from the lack of results at Earth Summit II, in 1997, NGOs and governments have already started to discuss what might make **Earth Summit III** as significant an event as was Rio in 1992. Earth Summit III will be ten years after Rio, and 30 years after Stockholm. The negotiations this year - and in each year subsequent — will feed directly into the substance of the 2002 Summit, and its success or failure.

Early support for the Summit to return to **Rio** is gaining ground, though other places that have been mentioned are **Delhi**, **Bangkok** and **Manila**.

On the last day of the 1998 session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, the CSD NGO Steering Committee organized a side event on the preparation for Earth Summit III. Speakers included Under Secretary General Nitin Desai, and Derek Osborn, co-chair of the preparatory meetings for Earth Summit II. Following the meeting a draft paper was produced to help NGOs, other Major Groups, and governments think forward to Earth Summit III.

At the recent UNEP Governing Council, the Steering Committee held a further consultation. Speakers there included UNEP Deputy Director Kakakhel. What follows is a summary of the ideas that have come out of the two side events.

On Process

- 2002, Earth Summit III, needs to be a significant event, closer to Rio than UNGASS.
- The Millennium Assembly in 2000 needs to be seen as a key post to 2002.
- The other UNGASS sessions in 2000 need to be considered as stepping stones to 2002.
- It should be held outside New York; Rio was thought to be a good idea.
- It should have regional preparatory conferences.
- Earth Summit III should seriously deal with implementation.
- Earth Summit III could look at a new Global Plan of Action — 10 years is a good time span to draw up a new action plan.
- Earth Summit III will be 30 years from Stockholm, therefore the opportunity for some clear trends to inform the political discussions should be available.
- Earth Summit III could focus on topics not being discussed by other fora and/or give a push to those that need it.
- Earth Summit III should be at Heads of State level.
- Major Groups should be involved with the drafting of the agreements that come out of Earth Summit III.

(Continued on page 2)

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Consumption and Production Notes

UK Launches Commission; Plans Down to Earth Conference

“Clean and productive environments, sustainable resource consumption and stable climate patterns are not the heritage of any one country or of any one generation. They are the life support system of the entire planet. Sadly, they are under siege by rich and poor nations alike.”

James Gustave Speth — Administrator, UNDP

The UK will host an international conference, ‘Down to Earth — Sustainable Consumption in the 21st Century,’ from 22 to 24 September, 1999. Organized by Hampshire County Council, and supported by WHO, the World Bank and the Division on Sustainable Development, it will look at identifying the challenges for sustainable consumption. Topics under consideration include tourism, consumerism, waste and energy.

The conference will utilise open space technology. OST is a framework for creating high energy participation and commitment to action, through self management issues. Participants create and manage their own program of parallel sessions around a central theme.

The conference will be holding its first International Advisory Board Meeting on Friday, 26th February at the CSD Inter-

essional. The conference hopes to take the outcomes from the CSD and develop them over the three days to give stakeholders some key tools.

The Oxford Commission on Sustainability also has been launched recently in the U.K. The Commission will examine ways in which patterns of consumption may have to change if the quality of life is to be preserved and enhanced without irreversible damage to the environment.

The Commission will be chaired by the Rt Hon John Gummer, the former UK Secretary of State for the Environment. The Commission is based at the Oxford Centre for the Environment, Ethics and Society at Mansfield College Oxford. The Commission is aiming to report to Earth Summit III in 2002.

Rio Grinds

— “What Rio did for the environment, Rio Grinds does for gossip.”

Rio Grinds **strongly** denies that the elimination of this column last year had anything to do with the present disappearance of Outreach editor, Jan Gustav Strandenaes. We look forward to his return in week two.

The contest has begun — the UK is at present leading Ministerial attendance for the CSD in April with three Ministers coming.

(Continued from page 1)

- There will be other events, such as the Summit of the American Presidents, in 2000, which need to be linked into the preparation process.

On Issues

Until the last few weeks before Earth Summit II, the participants didn't know what the issues would be — there may be the same uncertainty about 2002, for the same reasons. However, some of the key issues likely to be around then are:

- **Poverty eradication** — a crucial indicator of success.
 - **Mega Cities** — possible combination of the Habitat II Agenda and Agenda 21. opportunities exist with the review of Habitat II in 2001 and Rio in 2002.
 - **Finance** — there is no question this will be an important issue over the coming three years, with the financing development conference in 1999, and finance being a key issue at the CSD in 2000. This will include FDI, Debt, Aid, domestic mobilization, micro credit.
 - **Trade and Sustainable Development.**
 - **Transport** — possible convention for Europe 2002.
 - **Biodiversity** — bio genetics, GMOs, bioprospecting;
 - **Local agenda 21** — this will have been developed further by 2002, and the need for a clear review of the lessons learnt and the way forward on local implementation is important.
- All governments should have produced a **sustainable development strategy** by 2002, and these should be reviewed.
 - Other important issues are **technology transfer, indicators to help implementation, capacity building, stakeholder commitments, sustainable consumption and production, and tourism.**
 - **Freshwater** — the process set up by the CSD this year will have 2002 as a target date and the need for further international action in that year may be crucial.
 - **Forests** — there was some debate about the IFF being able to promote a convention in 2000, for 2002.
 - **Climate change** — though the main negotiations for this happen in another fora the Summit may also be a place for key messages to be made.
 - **Chemicals** — there is a need for one forum to discuss chemicals.
 - **World Environment Organization** — a very delicate issue as it is perceived as a northern issue. There was some discussion on if there is going to be one and what it might include. Suggestions include UNEP, Habitat, GEF and Conventions.



Towards Earth Summit III - 2002

Tourism and “Sustainable” Tourism — what’s the difference?

by Meenakshi Varadani

(Sustainable Production and Consumption Caucus)

Perhaps in the future we will not need to add labels like ‘sustainable’ and ‘environmental’ to differentiate between ‘desirable’ and ‘prevalent’ practices and products — since by then profitability would also mean responsible production and consumption. Today, however, we still need to ask the right questions to determine what is sustainable — assuming sustainability is the collective goal of the tourism industry.

Tourism is one of the world’s largest industries and has the responsibility to take leadership in sustainability. Fortunately tourism’s profitability and longevity depend on ‘authenticity’, ‘clean environment’, and ‘safe conditions’ of a destination — all of which are components of sustainability. Unsustainability results in adverse environmental, economic, and social impacts such as: unplanned growth, deteriorated environment, loss of wildlife habitat and biodiversity, inflated property values, and exported economic benefits.

Typically, planning and development environmental impact analysis explore alternatives. Present tourism development programs assume tourism is the sole economic development option. Some experts justify this by saying that the adverse impacts are inevitable, thus increasing the risk of tourism being exploitative. This may be avoided by conducting a ‘community tourism assessment’ before developing a tourism program.

Social impacts are most visible at locations with indigenous populations. Partly the destination’s popularity is due to the indigenous people’s ‘authenticity’. However that very popularity becomes one of the biggest threats to the authenticity.

Simulation — an option — is usually not so popular, nor desired. New money invariably transforms the pace of growth leading to infusion of foreign cultures. Who should decide this transformation pace? Tourism assessment would have to follow an appropriate educational program to develop community skills to take informed decisions. Could development wait till the necessary supports are in place?

Voluntary Codes and Guidelines

The voluntary codes and guidelines for sustainable tourism must go beyond the local regulations which deal with urban design controls, pollution control, and such. Achieving poorly defined ‘low impact’ thresholds for sustainable tourism are not sufficient.

Sustainable tourism guidelines should address the issues of education and outreach, appropriate community development, reinvesting profits into natural habitat and wildlife protection, social impacts and heritage conservation pro-

grams, infrastructure development, using alternate energy, rain water harvesting, and waste management. Demonstrating high compliance with existing requirements, while not meeting sustainable tourism guidelines, misleads people.

Supportive Roles

The government, private sector, media, consumers, NGOs, and host communities all need to adopt supportive roles in the processes. The government policy makers at the highest level must initiate tourism programs in conjunction with community development. They have to shepherd the various governing agencies to work together. Other key roles include: facilitating informed community decision making, developing guidelines, creating information dissemination systems, and developing supporting infrastructure.

Businesses and industry are expected to act responsibly in good faith. To be taken seriously for their voluntary initiatives, they would have to follow guidelines and ensure transparency, local community stakeholders’ involvement, accountability, clearly stated environmental and social objectives to be met within specific time frames, adoption of appropriate indicators, bench-marking, monitoring and measuring effectiveness, independent verification, and adequate reporting. Their sponsorship is essential for consumer awareness, training guides, steering advertisements to reflect the sustainable tourism guidelines.

There is a growing segment of tourists seeking to contribute to the environment, and understand the heritage of an area. Consumers set the demand and thus the need for consumer awareness. Information provided directly by visitors to a credible consumer reporting organization can be an effective monitoring tool to help ensure accountability.

NGOs can be a tremendous resource to facilitate visioning processes, conduct community tourism assessment, and provide independent verification. Their opinion may play a big part in the perceived credibility of initiatives.

The host communities must participate as stakeholders in the decision making. They need to establish which resources can and can not be shared, with whom, and when — all along ensuring the upkeep and maintenance of their environment, as per the guidelines. They have to define the image of their destination, to target the tourism segment compatible with their needs.

Clearly, to achieve sustainable tourism, limits for visitation and acceptable change have to be set. Issues need to be resolved or revisited, simultaneously with the phased development of a healthy and responsible tourism industry.

ISSUE OVERVIEWS: Consumer Guidelines, Tourism

Consumer Guidelines: Recognizing the links between sustainability and consumer protection, the UN Commission on Sustainable Development recommended in 1995 that the Consumer Protection Guidelines be extended into the area of sustainable consumption. To begin the process, the CSD Secretariat held an expert meeting on Consumer Protection and Sustainable Consumption, in early 1998, with wide participation from Consumers International and other NGOs, business, and government stakeholders. The result of the meeting was a draft text that has been used as the basis of informal intergovernmental negotiations that have resulted in a revised document that will be presented to the CSD Intersessional on Wednesday and then forwarded to the CSD. The proposed additions call for government action in:

- 1) consumer access to meaningful information on the impacts of goods and services;
- 2) elimination of government subsidies for unsustainable goods and services; and use of economic instruments to encourage sustainable practices;
- 3) action to encourage industry to design produce and market more sustainable goods and services

4) actions to support transfer of more sustainable technologies and the eradication of poverty.

Tourism offers a great opportunity to focus on all aspects of sustainable development. It is a resource intensive industry, it impacts on the cultural fabric of communities as well as the socio economic - employment, welfare and local economy. It invites us to develop partnerships between different stakeholder groups and to creatively look at what regulatory framework is needed to support this.

In particular NGOs believe there are some key guidelines that would help in moving towards a more sustainable approach to tourism.

We believe any tourist development needs to involve the relevant stakeholders in its development and management, in particular the involvement of women is crucial. To enable this to happen we need to see capacity building, through tools such as education, training, provision of information and access to decision making processes, markets, revenues and the retention of asset. It is essential to ensure that all stakeholders can have the ability to participate to the fullest.

NGO Announcements

<i>Daily</i>		
9.30 a.m. — 10.15 a.m. Conference Room D	NGO Strategy Meeting	CSD NGO Steering Committee
<i>Monday 22 February</i>		
1.00 p.m. — 3.00 p.m. Church Center	NGO Steering Committee Meeting	CSD NGO Steering Committee
1.15 p.m. — 2.45 p.m. Conference Room D	Sustainable Consumption Indicators	Government of Germany and Wuppertal Institute
<i>Tuesday 23 February</i>		
1.15 p.m. — 2.45 pm Conference Room 4	Roundtable on Indigenous Peoples and Tourism	Indigenous Peoples Development Network
1.15 p.m. — 2.45 p.m. Conference Room D	The Role of Industry Initiatives in Promoting Sustainable Tourism — a multistaker dialogue	The International Hotels Environment Initiative
<i>Wednesday 24 February</i>		
1.30 p.m. — 2.45 p.m. Conference Room 6	Seminar: Collaboration for Sustainable Development: A Perspective for Europe and Central Asia	World Bank (Johannes Linn, Vice-President, World Bank's Europe and Central Asia Region)